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LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

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May Precipitation Over the Great Lakes
As a percentage of the long-term May average:
Great Lakes Basin 70%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair) 72%
Lake Superior 65%
Lakes Michigan-Huron 75%
Lake Ontario 82%
Note: These figures are preliminary.
May Outflows From the Great Lakes

Volume 6, Number 6 **June 5, 1998**

Dry Weather Throughout Great Lakes Basin

Risk of Shore Damage Eases

A decline in water levels on several of the Great Lakes during May has helped to ease somewhat the risk of serious flood and erosion damages to shore properties.

May is usually a time when spring showers combine with high flows from inland lakes and rivers to rapidly increase water levels on the Great Lakes. However, this May was the second dry month in a row, and snowmelt occurred much earlier than usual this year, with the result that flows into the Great Lakes were well below average during the month.

While water levels usually rise by 5 to 10 centimetres during May, this year there was little change from the previous month's level for Lakes Superior, Huron, St. Clair and Erie. During the last part of the month, levels on Lakes St. Clair and Erie began to decline steadily. These two lakes may have reached their peak level for the year in early May, which is over a month earlier than usual.

By the end of May, all of the Great Lakes were lower than one year earlier. Lake Superior was 8 centimetres below average, while Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie were 35, 45, and 50 centimetres, respectively, above average.

As a result of the below average level on Lake Superior and above average level on Lake Huron, Lake Superior's outflow during June has been reduced to 81 percent of average, in accordance with the lake's regulation plan.

Despite the decline in lake levels, there is still a moderate risk of flood and erosion damage to shore properties along Lakes Erie and St. Clair this summer during extended periods of strong winds.

Low Levels on Lake St. Lawrence

Lake St. Lawrence is the section of the St. Lawrence River immediately upstream of the control structure at Cornwall. Water levels in this area are strongly related to flows in the river. High flows through the control structure cause the level of Lake St. Lawrence to decline, while low flows cause it to rise. The lake's level also tends to move in the same direction as the level of Lake

As a percentage of the long-term May average:

Lake Superior	96%
Lake Erie	119%
Lake Huron	106%
Lake Ontario	131%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Ontario. During May, the combination of high flows and a declining Lake Ontario level led to a drop in Lake St. Lawrence's level. In late May it was about 60 centimetres below average and near its record low. It is anticipated that flows will remain high in June and Lake Ontario's level will continue to decline, which will lead to a further decline in Lake St. Lawrence's level. The level in June could approach the minimum on record for the month, which was 72.98 metres and occurred in 1987.

Lake Ontario's Level Declines Rapidly

Dry conditions during May, combined with a very high outflow from Lake Ontario, led to a rapid decline in the lake's level. At the end of May the lake's level was 16 centimetres lower than at the beginning of the month, but still 21 centimetres above average. It is anticipated that it's level will continue to decline for the next several months.

Due to the early snowmelt this year and dry conditions, flows from the Ottawa River to the St. Lawrence River in late May were only 36 percent of average. As a result, water levels on Lac St. Louis around Montreal have declined to about 15 centimetres above average.

The decrease in water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River has greatly reduced the risk of damage to shore properties in these areas.

Public Meetings Scheduled

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control is holding a public meeting on June 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sackets Harbor Central School, 215 South Broad Street in Sackets Harbor, New York.

The International Lake Superior Board of Control is holding a public meeting on June 23 from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the City Council Chambers, South Haven City Hall, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, Michigan.

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